



MERRIMACK VALLEY WORKFORCE BOARD

Pursuant to Governor Baker's [Emergency Order](#) Modifying the State's Open Meeting Law issued March 12, 2020 quarterly meeting of the MassHire Merrimack Valley Workforce Board will be held using remote participation.

Online Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82908791212?pwd=UVJWMMVFQTzQrU25aQlZqZ1ZZZGxtQT09>

Meeting ID: 829 0879 1212

Meeting Password: 136138

QUARTERLY MEETING

Minutes

Tuesday, June 23, 2020

9:00am

MEMBERS IN PARTICIPATION:

Joseph Bevilacqua, Ann Marie Borgesi, Edward Bartkiewicz, Ron Contrado, Evelyn Friedman, Lane Glenn, Andrew Herlihy, Robin Hynds, Supt. John Lavoie, Jeff Linehan, Joselyn Marte, Marianne Paley-Nadel, Carol Riemer

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Christian Brennan, Marko Duffy, Cynthia Faulkner, Gail Griffin, Supt. Maureen Lynch, Rosa Muñoz, Fred Shaheen, Ellen Weinhold, Bob Westcott, Cal Williams, Juan Yopez

GUESTS IN PARTICIPATION:

Allison Dolan-Wilson, Linda Rohrer, Scott Lancaster, Julie Moran, Michael Bevilacqua

STAFF IN PARTICIPTION:

Abel Vargas, Susan Almono, Michael Paglia, Corina Ruiz, Varsha Gandhi, Brian Norris, Leah Sparks

1. Call to Order

In absence of Chairman Yopez, Planning Committee Chairwoman, Ann Marie Borgesi, chaired the meeting. A quorum being present, Chairwoman Borgesi called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m.

2. Welcome and roll call

Ann Marie welcomed everyone and asked for a roll call.

3. Approval of the Minutes of the April 28, 2020 meeting (vote required)

Chairwoman Yopez called for a motion on the minutes of the April 28, 2020 board meeting.

Motion by John Lavoie, seconded by Joselyn Marte to approve the minutes of the April 28, 2020 meeting as submitted. Motion passed unanimously.

4. Report of Chair

Chairwoman Borgesi talked the long-term effects of the crisis. She discussed the unknown nature of this pandemic and what it means for the employment picture going forward. Ann Marie said that we do know is that smaller main street businesses will likely close causing continued job loss.

Ann Marie said that Southwick will close effective July 20th and will prompt an application of a National Dislocated Worker, like the grant the MMVWB applied for during the Polartec closing. There will be an all hands-on deck effort from the board and career center to support those workers. Board and career center staff have been in touch with management over at Southwick and they are working on a plan to engage their employees to offer them services.

There has been other company layoffs and it is anticipated that more will occur in the future.

Chairwoman Borgesi said that the career center continues to deliver services. She presented data that demonstrates the career center's ability to support customers during this time.

The career center has been working over the past month to plan the reopening of the building for both employees and customers. The Governor's plan has been adopted and we are nearing a comprehensive plan that will keep everyone safe. The state has a recommended schedule of bringing staff back into the office in September. The reopening plan is fluid and can change depending conditions on the ground.

5. Annual Plan Update – Planning Committee to act on behalf of the board with regards to the annual plan and budget (vote required)

Chairwoman Borgesi called for a motion for the Planning Committee to act on behalf of the board with regards to the annual plan and budget as it has been done so in previous years.

Motion by Ron Contrado, seconded by Bob Wescott, to approve the Planning Committee to act on behalf of the board with regards to the annual plan and budget. Motion passed unanimously.

6. Special Presentation: Recession-Proof Jobs Programs – President Lane Glenn, NECC.

President Glenn said that the Haverhill career center location received its certificate of occupancy.

Lane said that NECC has been mindful of the Northeast Regional Labor Market Blueprint and have developed non-credit programs, which can be found on the NECC website. He then presented Scott A. Lancaster, NECC Assistant Dean for the Division of Health Professions.

Mr. Lancaster shared some PowerPoint slides with the board. He said that the NECC Recession Task force was created in early March 2020, before the full impacts of COVID-19 were known in the Commonwealth.

Using multiple sources, the team researched both the workforce needs in the area, and statewide, and identified educational opportunities that NECC could offer to address these findings.

Additionally, the team looked at data from STRADA, EAB, and others who have conducted recent and relevant research into the wants and needs of those who have lost their jobs during the pandemic. This helped them

understand the needs of people who are looking to re-enter the workforce, upskill in their current position, or change careers completely as a result of the pandemic.

The research concluded that displaced workers are seeking non-credit courses that were both short in duration and valuable to get them rapidly back to work. They identified multiple NON-CREDIT offerings that NECC could offer this fall and coming spring that will provide a quality education and training that would allow for displaced workers to quickly reenter the workforce with the new skills and credentials that would help them maximize their employability.

Some of the work areas and programming they found to be in demand and that we could immediately offer include:

- Certified Nursing Assistant
- Information Technology (IT) Programs
- Computer Systems / Data Entry
- Project Management Certificate
- Accounting / Payroll Accounting / Bookkeeping
- Human Resources Certificate
- Pharmacy Tech Certificate

Scott said they also identified was the need to allow as much as possible for these non-credit offerings to be integrated into for-credit degree or certificate pathways. This maximizes the value of the non-credit courses as it allows the student to return to the college later and easily integrate their prior education into additional credentials that will allow for even better paying jobs in the future.

An example of this type of pathway is the Nursing Assistant to Healthcare Technician Pathway. NECC offers a non-credit CNA program, that is integrated into two separate pathways in our Healthcare Technician Certificate program. If a student matriculates into either of these pathways, they are given 6 college credits for their CNA certification.

Northern Essex does not require that the CNA program be completed at our institution however, any CNA in the commonwealth is eligible.

Once the CNA decides to enter either the Phlebotomy or EKG technician program, they can complete it in just 2 semesters (FT) and are then eligible to take the national certification examinations for those professions. Many students go on to complete BOTH pathways and they are employable in residential care, rehabilitation or acute care settings, and some return later to continue their education as LPNs or Registered Nurses.

7. Reports of Committee Chairs

i. Planning and Career Center Committee

Highlights from the report include:

- The WB submitted a proposal: WCTF FY21 IT Career Advancement Program – training 33 unemployed workers to be Computer User Support Specialists. I funded, GLTS will be the training partner
- The WB will be applying for a National Dislocated Worker Grant (NDWG) to serve Southwick laid off employees
- Humanitarian Food Services NDWG: Re-employ persons who lost their job as a result of COVID-19 in humanitarian food service jobs. - \$2,400 per referred worker

- Employment Recovery NDWG: Provide re-employment services and job training to persons who lost their job as a result of COVID-19. - \$500,000
- DOL Fostering Opioid Recovery thru Workforce Development: Train 66 opioid impacted individuals for in-demand jobs, and 50 for occupations to help address the opioid crisis – Com. Health Workforce, Recovery Coach, Paramedic & EMT. - \$2,070,682
- Health Care Hub Planning Grant: Funding to plan the development of training programs in health care space - \$25,000
- The WB performance numbers as of 5/31/20:
 - Job Seekers Served: 64% of Plan
 - Employers Served: 83% of Plan
 - WIOA Youth: 44% of Plan (86% Carry In, 25% New Participants)
 - WIOA Adult: 53% of Plan (92% Carry In, 43% New Participants)
 - WIOA Dislocated Worker: 88% of Plan (92% Carry In, 83% New Participants)
- Performance was affected in part due to COVID 19 Pandemic. Other opportunities for improvements have been identified and will be implemented during Fiscal Year 2021.
- 2021 Performance Goals to be developed as part of upcoming process.

ii. Youth Committee

In absence of chairman Williams, Susan Almono presented the Youth report.

It has been a challenging quarter. Nonetheless, pre and post COVID-19, our youth department staff and local high schools have worked together to make an impact on students' lives, helping them to gain the knowledge, skills, and awareness to make informed college and career decisions.

This is a summer of firsts – including the first time we are enrolling YouthWorks Summer Jobs applicants through online applications and eligibility documentation submitted online, as well as online applications by employers.

Our most notable “first” is our implementation of the Commonwealth Corporation designed YouthWorks Strong virtual career development program. This robust program will provide a range of opportunities from career readiness skill development to rigorous career-focused project-based learning to career pathway training in high-demand fields. Significant stipends, ongoing case management and support services will ensure that participants have the resources and guidance to thrive.

Regardless of the current challenges, our area youth and young adults will have a summer of learning, career growth and support with YouthWorks Strong.

We thank our partner schools and local youth servicing organizations for collaborating with us to recruit over 450, 14-21 year old youth for the Merrimack Valley YouthWorks Summer 2020 subsidized employment program! Also, we appreciated each of the employer partners that will be hosting over 300 youth virtually and in person this summer.

Youth staff call on each of our partner school, CBOs, and employers to start thinking NOW about how we can support our youth year-round.

Please visit our website to read the new edition of our MV Connect newsletter – see what we've accomplished in our Connecting Activities this year.

We'll work together through the summer and look forward to providing students with a comprehensive programming during the summer and next school year to best meet their school to career and workforce needs.

iii. Nominating Committee

No report.

iv. Finance Report

Abel talked about challenges for next year. The MV received the largest cut in the state of 15%; WIOA Youth dopped 27.3% and WIOA Adult 26.6%. Abel said he will be in touch with the state to get a better sense.

Linda Rohrer said there's substantial training carry-in funds and that they have applied for other grants as well.

8. Report of Executive Director

Abel Vargas presented data showing the number of UI claims by week for the 6 largest communities in Merrimack Valley, Lawrence having the highest and Amesbury the lowest. He also presented data on the unemployment rate for the 6 largest communities in the Merrimack Valley, Lawrence having the highest of 27.6% in April 2020. Abel presented unemployment data by region compared to the State; Cape and Islands has the highest at 22.1% for April 2020 and Metro/South West the lowest at 11.4%.

Abel said that many are anxious because of the risk of getting COVID-19 and some are seeing a benefit of the extended UI benefits and hold on to it. Its anticipated that in July, folks will be looking to re-enter the workforce went the extended benefits end.

Ann Marie wondered if there is any value in sharing best practices from employers who were able to remain open. GLFHC had less than 25 staff test positive for COVID-19 and that was due to not practicing social distancing. Linda said yes, that is valuable information.

Ann Marie concluded by saying that we can lean on each other for ideas.

9. Other Business

No other business.

10. Adjournment (vote required)

Having no further business Chairwoman Borgesi called for a motion to adjourn.

Marianne Paley-Nadel made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Joselyn Marte. Motion passed, and meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Corina Ruiz

Recorder